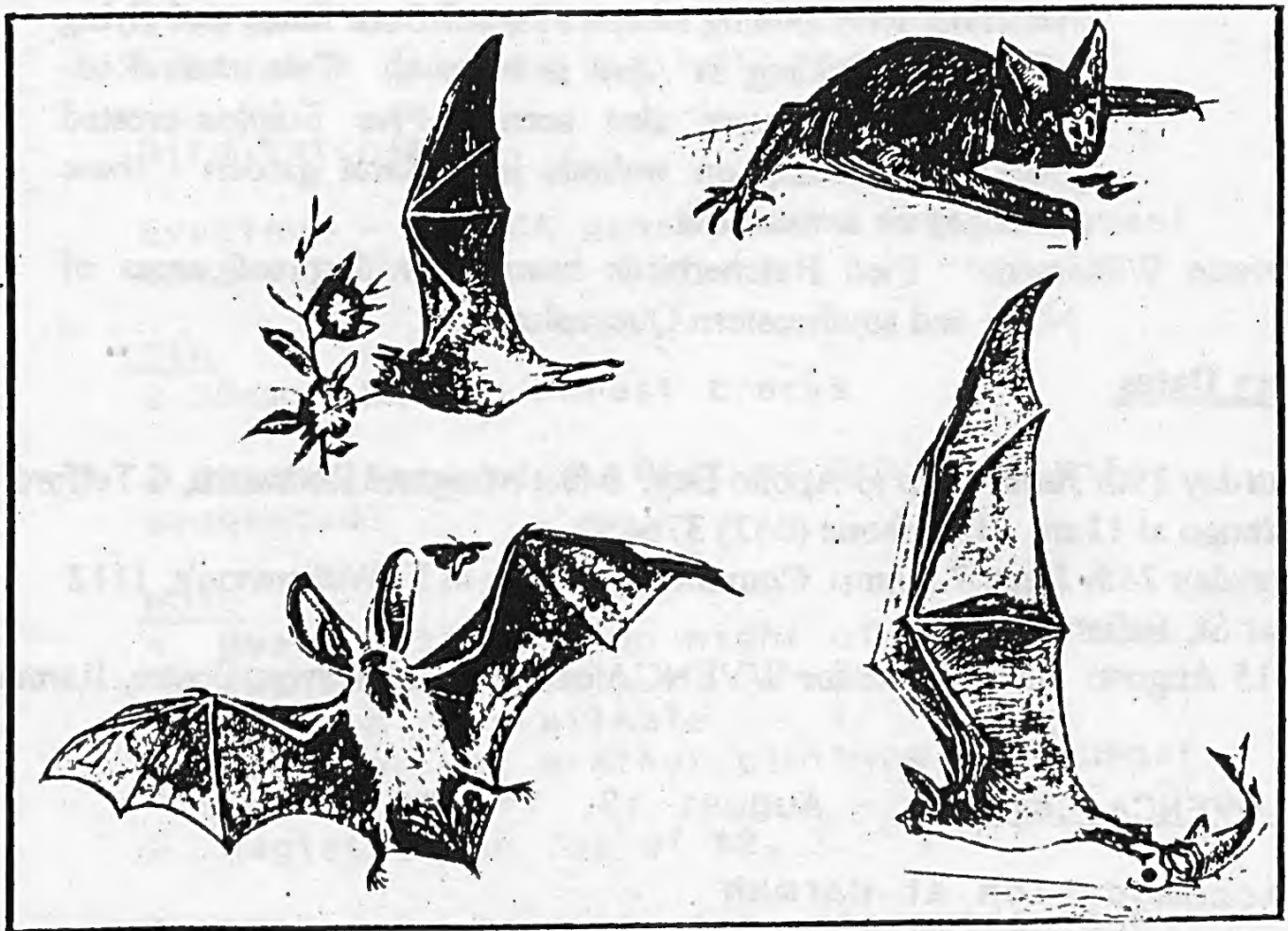


JUNE 1993.

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat *Incorporated*

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting June 4 Natural history of bats - Ms L Lumsden
- Meeting July 2 Photographing nature - Mr A Henderson
- Excursion June 6 Hillcrest, Linton BOC blocks - Mr G Binns
- Excursion July 4 Mounts Buninyong and Warrenheip - Mr K
Hammond.



President : Dr. K. McDonnell Ph:053 326800
Secretary: Mr. J. Gregurke 394993
Treasurer: Mrs. F. Williamson 327631
Editor: Mr. A. Dyson 413948

Meetings as specified are held
at the School of Mines and
Industries, Lydiard Street Sth,
Art Building, commencing at 7.30
p.m. EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED,
COMMENCE FROM BOOK CITY, cnr
STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS, BALLARAT
at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS
OR at 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY.

Field Reports: May Meeting

- John Gregurke: Large numbers (up to 160) of Hardhead Duck on Lake Wendouree. Immature Darter has also been present for past month.
- Lyndsay Fink: Fairy Penguins seen swimming in Port Phillip Bay off Queenscliff.
- Avis Barlow: Red-browed Finches back in Buninyong garden.
- Alan Morrison: Usually one Grey Butcherbird in Wendouree garden but recently 5 birds were perched on TV antennae.
- Wayne Walker: At Yarrangobilly (Kosciusko National Park) a pair of copulating Copperhead snakes were observed entwined and unconcerned by observers.
- Stephanie Davison: Two grey Currawongs in garden trees at Ballarat North.
- Greg Binns: At Turriff a Brown-headed Honeyeater and Yellow-rumped Thornbill were pulling scraps of wool from fence and flying off. Nest building in April is unusual. Two male Red-capped Robins were also seen. Five Sulphur-crested Cockatoos feeding on walnuts in Ballarat garden - these birds pay an annual visit.
- Florence Williamson: Pied Butcherbirds heard in widespread areas of NSW and southeastern Queensland.

Diary Dates

- Saturday 19th June: Trip to Apollo Bay. Meet Margaret Rotheram, 6 Telford St, Marengo at 11am. Telephone (052) 376430.
- Thursday 24th June, 7.30pm: Committee meeting at F. Williamson's, 1112 Ligar St, Ballarat.
- 13-15 August: Altered date for WVFNCA campout at Dharnya Centre, Barmah.

WVFNCA Campout - August 13, 14 and 15

Accommodation at Barmah

* Dharnya Centre (accommodates 56) - \$12 p.n. - 2, 4 or 6 bunks per room. BYO bedding. Meals provided.

* Belinda Lodge (accommodates 12) \$15 p.n. - 6 bunks in 2 rooms. Kitchen facilities available or meals provided at Dharnya Centre.

- * Camping - caravan parks in Barmah.
 - Dharnya manager will permit camping by the river (free) with use of Centre facilities (including meals).
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Program

13th - 7.30pm - Welcome at the Dharnya Centre

14th (cut lunches can be ordered)

9.00am - Wetland cruise of 2 hrs. (29 passengers). Pay \$13 on board but book with John Gregurke a.s.a.p).

9.30am - Mr H Marshall - local botanist available all day for help and advice.

Bird watching.

Evening - WVFNCA general meeting and guest speakers.

15th

9.30am - Barmah Forest tracks

2.00pm - Farewells (Port of Echuca visit suggested)

NOTE

- Meals available on night of the 13th at the Barmah Hotel.
- Canoe hire available
- Remember wet weather clothing and rubber boots.
- Registration fee of \$2.

Contact John Gregurke for information and bookings. (ph 394993)

Geoff Park, a teacher working at the Creswick Nursery and Landcare Centre was our guide for the morning. He is establishing an education centre for schools and the community. He lead us around the Landcare Interpretation Trail. This goes through severely degraded land which has been invaded by many weed species. Spanish Heath, English Broom, Wild Strawberry, Radiata Pine, Cootamundra wattle, Early Black Wattle are some of the "out of place" plants. Work has commenced to reduce the numbers of weeds and restore indigenous species to the area. A variety of landcare problems and possible solutions can be seen along the trail. Kangaroo grass is growing in some areas and trials are being conducted to establish it in other areas. Erosion gullies, wetlands and grasslands are prominent features. A brochure is available for the public to follow the trail at any time. A flock of 30 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew between gum trees and pines.

After lunch at St. Georges Lake we had a short walk in the forest to the east. The track is on the edge of a water race built in the mining days and follows the contour around the gully. The vegetation has grown well after the wet spring and early summer and shows no ill effects of the dry autumn. Birds were fairly quiet but we saw Sitella, Grey Currawong, Grey Fantail, White-browed Scrubwren, White-naped Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Yellow Robin, White-throated Treecreeper, Crimson Rosella. JG.



ORCHIDS of the BALLARAT DISTRICT

No. 10 of a series.

Botanical Name: *Pterostylis parviflora*

(meaning: small flowered)

Common Names: Tiny Greenhood,
Baby Greenhood.

Flowering time: Autumn to early spring.

This little orchid is quite common throughout the Ballarat district and is usually found in the lighter forests and heathlands, mostly in the shelter of taller plants.

The tiny greenhood is a slender and erect plant, about 10. to 30cms high with small sheathing stem bracts. The basal leaves are on a side shoot but are seldom present at flowering time. There are up to five flowers in a terminal raceme on the glabrous wiry stem, very small, about 10mm. long., and turned to face inwards. They are a translucent white with green stripes and often tinged with brown. The lateral sepals are erect on either side of the hood.

The unusual inward facing tiny flowers help distinguish this species from all other greenhoods.



Arboreal Fauna of the Maryborough District

(Meeting address by Russell Trainor - 7 May)

In 1990, Russell Trainor, an undergraduate at Ballarat University College's Biological and Resource Management course, constructed and placed 60 artificial hollows in forest surrounding Maryborough in an attempt to find out what species exist in the local Box-Ironbark forests. Since then a further 150 or so hollows have been constructed with students of the Maryborough District Secondary College as an ongoing Environmental Education project.

A great deal of knowledge has been gained on the movement and breeding of some species. Although students are involved in most aspects of the project, no disturbance is allowed to species especially sensitive to interference such as Eastern Rosellas and Brush-tailed Phascogales. To date 8 mammal and 8 bird species have been recorded using the hollows placed at 6 sites - representing 3 distinct habitats, Urban bushland reserves, Box-Ironbark woodland and Wetlands.

Mammals recorded - Possums (Common Brush-tail and Ringtail), Bats (Chocolate Wattled, Goulds Wattled and Lesser Long-eared), Yellow Footed Antechinus, Sugar Glider and Brush-tailed Phascogale.

Birds recorded - Ducks (Wood and Pacific Black), Eastern Rosella, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Red Rumped Parrot, Treecreepers (Brown and White Throated) and feral Starlings (nests destroyed).

Future aims of the project

1. To design and construct hollows for specific species not using existing hollows.
2. To enter records onto a computer database.
3. To extend network of hollows to a 50 km radius of Maryborough.
4. To provide hollows specifically for the rare and endangered Brush-tailed Phascogale.

Protect your Cat, Protect your Wildlife

The Department of Conservation and Environment is conducting a Community Education campaign called *Protect your Cat, Protect your Wildlife*. The campaign involves explaining to the community the huge toll of wildlife that cats catch and encouraging a more responsible approach to cat ownership.

This is an opportunity to send in information about the damage cats cause to wildlife.

Information can be sent to Bernice Dowling, Cat Working Group, ARI, P.O. Box 137, Heidelberg, 3084. Telephone (03) 450 8600.

The information required is:

Date and time animal was found;

Wildlife species;

Location animal was found, eg. Postcode, Town, National Park;

Type of injury;

Fate of animal, eg. dead when found; treated by local vet; or other as appropriate.

This is a short term study so information should be sent promptly.



LORDS OF ANTARCTICA (continued)

The Kapitan Khlebnikov is a Russian ice-breaker. This was the first time they had taken passengers, so the crew doubled up in the cabins to give us their rooms. This was also the first time they had been in Southern waters. The Captain, a young, friendly Russian who spoke English very well, told us that we would have an uncomfortable cruise if we pitched. He made sure we rolled most of the time. We did roll to 43° in 12 metre waves. We were assured that the ship was designed to roll to 80°! The captain did not demonstrate its capabilities.

Soon after we left Cape Town the barometer fell and we found we were heading NE instead of SE. We stayed on the edge of the storm and eventually headed for our destination, to the South, of Crozet Island. 7

The two French scientists accompanied us while we were on both Crozet and Kerguelen Islands (French Islands in the South Indian Ocean).

Crozet is an archipelago of 5 volcanic islands and many islets and rocks. Tussock grass, Kerguelen cabbage, *Acaena* sp. and *Azorella* cushions dominate the moors. Only mosses and lichens grow beyond 300m ASL. Introduced rabbits have caused damage to sections of the larger islands. Cats and mice were also introduced while pigs and goats failed to establish. The islands were discovered in 1772 and occupied by the sealers in 19th C. Since 1938 it has been a National Park and in 1962 a meteorological station was established. Ornithologists are doing research on the 3 larger islands.

Twenty seven bird species are known to breed on the islands with a possible 4 others.

We saw wandering albatross nesting on the moors and as we descended to the beach we could hear and smell the thousands of King Penguins congregated in the valley. These birds weigh up to 40lbs. They establish a definite territory, usually the size it is standing on. They lay one pear-shaped egg and the parents take it in turns to incubate the egg which is possible as the rookeries are close to the sea.

Incubation is from 52-56 days. The chicks are covered with a brown down. They take 10-13 months to fledge. Two eggs are laid every three years.

The King Penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) breeds North of the pack ice on islands both N & S of the Convergence. They were killed by the sealers for their oil, in the last century.

Lesser Sheathbills were seen amongst the Penguins. They scavenge and are considered to be the vultures of the Antarctic. They eat almost anything of organic origin and the leathery facial wattles protect the facial feathers. They are the only non web-footed birds in this region.

Also seen were Kelp Gulls, Skuas, Southern Giant Petrels, Elephant Seals etc.

(to be continued) H.B.